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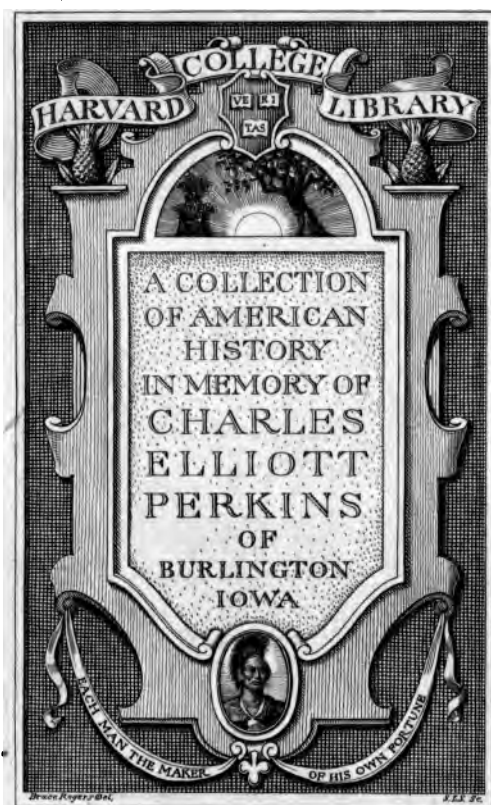
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SPEECH

OF

HON. THOMAS F. BOWIE, OF MARYLAND,

ON

CONSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATIONS;

DELIVERED

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SPEECH.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. BOWIE said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I had not the slightest idea of participating in this debate when I entered this Hall to-day. My friend from Virginia [Mr. JENKINS] has laid down the true policy which the Government ought to pursue in reference to the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. GIDDINGS] has discussed the policy of the Republican party. But I intend to speak of the great progress which our Republic ought to make—to speak of the genius and the spirit of the Constitution of the United States, which is now on its onward progress. No power on earth can stop it. You and I may quarrel about what sort of domestic institutions we should have. You may prefer to enslave white men, while we prefer to enslave the African race. That is a matter of taste—it is not a matter for political discussion. You may not choose to have Africans as slaves. We do. You may take as many white men as you please to toil and labor in an inferior and degraded occupation. On our side, we say we will not enslave any white man whatever. We abominate the idea of white slaves. We go to Africa, and her sable descendants, when we want to make slaves. And for myself, I want none but their descendants in this country. But still, the cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar, and hemp plantations of the South and Southwest want, and must have, African labor. In truth they are the only generation of men who ought to serve the Anglo-Saxon race. Mr. Chairman, there was a time—I recollect it well—when to make allusion on this floor to the question of slavery would call up every Hotspur of the South. But now we have any number of anti-slavery speeches; and they fall upon our ears without even the ripple of an emotion. We have listened to you Black Republicans most calmly. We have been amused at the zeal and earnestness in which you seem to be so much delighted, and have so well reveled in all your extraordinary effusions. If you choose to indulge in a spirit of hatred and animosity and vengeance against southern men,

I can only say I do not admire you for these sentiments. I myself would advise the cultivation of very different feelings. I would plant and water flowers which should exhale no poison, but should only bring to us odors of unmixed and unadulterated parity.

Now, why should all this be done? We have heard enough about slavery and Kansas. The man who attempts to create feuds between individuals is a scoundrel; and he who attempts to create feuds between States is no patriot. We are all dependent on each other, in all and every one of the daily pursuits of life. Mr. Chairman, there is a spirit of evil and a spirit of good in this world of ours. Other men may invoke, if they please, the spirit of evil; but, for myself, I prefer to invoke the spirit of good.

I heard the speeches of the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. GIDDINGS,] and of Mr. WASHBURN, who led off in a speech of yesterday.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is not in order in calling the gentleman by name. He should refer to him as the member from Maine.

Mr. BOWIE. Well, sir, the gentleman from Maine, since you make the point; but you, Mr. Chairman, alone made it, and it would have been otherwise unnoticed. I was struck with the remarks which he made on the platform of that party which my friend from Ohio, [Mr. NICHOLS,] in his speech of yesterday, denominated the colored Republican party, but which I have been in the habit of designating as the Black Republican party, and who now call themselves plain Republicans. Sir, that party is composed of the followers of John Jay and of old John Adams, and of all those who were in favor of the alien and sedition laws in 1798; they are the descendants of those men who were in favor of expelling foreigners, and punishing men who spoke disrespectfully of existing powers. Show me a Know Nothing or a Republican, and I will show you one who is a lineal descendant, in opinion at least, from the old Federalists of those days. Some men, sir, are squeamish about names; they would rather be called Know Nothings than Democrats.

My old and venerable friend from Ohio has referred to that glorious old party to which he and I once belonged, and to the time when he and I were united under the flag of the Constitution of the country—a flag that protected the interests and rights of all the people of this country, from one end to the other, and made it one great Union. When my friend speaks of it as a great party, I can tell him that my heart reëchoes his praises of its power, its virtue, its constitutionality, and its nationality—at that day at least. When the Whig party was a truly national party, a party of the whole country, I hugged it to my bosom, and in 1852 I was on the electoral ticket for General Scott, with two of my Know-Nothing colleagues on the other side of this House. Ah! politics do make strange bed-fellows of us all. And how swift has been the change? I want the attention of my friend from Ohio, [Mr. GIDDINGS.] I call him my friend, for he is an honest man; I believe him to be a pure man, and a good man, but he will allow me to say that his goodness and his purity are running into an exceedingly refined channel. But he must remember that we are sometimes too good. "We throw our arrow o'er the house, and hit our brother." If he chooses to associate with the African race, I do not dispute his right to do so, nor do I dispute his taste. "*De gustibus non est disputandum.*" I can only say, I cannot do it; and you, Mr. Chairman, cannot do it; nor can any gentleman on this floor whose taste is a "leetle" different from his. I have no objection to his doing as he chooses, or saying what he pleases—not the slightest; but the gentleman mistakes if he thinks that now, in this enlightened day, the southern people are at all offended, or feel even sensitive about his rhapsodies and jeremiads on the subject of slavery. We have lived to see the time when these things would have ruffled our tempers; but, thank God, we live in the nineteenth century; that great age of improvement and progress, in which error and falsehood, detraction and slander, may roam at large, provided reason and truth are left to combat them. Mr. Chairman, I am in favor of the Constitution of my country; and whenever the hour comes, from whatever quarter it may, be it from the North or the South, that seeks an invasion of it, if God spares my life, I will myself plant a battery in front of its friends to put down all and every one of its enemies. I regard the safety of the South to be only under this great and generous Constitution of our forefathers. Our hopes, our safety, and I may say, our only sheet-anchor, are in the Constitution of our country. In the event of a refusal by you Abolitionists to enforce its just provisions, we of the South, through the instrumentality of the Federal Government, can turn the Federal guns upon you. You will then become traitors, and we the patriots of the land.

In respect to the operation of the fugitive slave law, should you Abolitionists refuse to carry out its provisions, as was once done at Boston, we shall have the power of the Constitution on our side; and we shall have, besides this, the pleasure of pointing the guns of the Federal Government against the enemies of constitutional freedom.

I fear that among the first who will fall in that fearful struggle will be the gentleman from Maine, [Mr. WASHBURN.] [Great laughter.] That is, if he "stands up to the rack, fodder or no fodder." [Renewed laughter.] Oh! what a great thing it is to have the flag of our country flying over our heads when we are fighting for the preservation of our rights! Sir, if dismemberment is to come, let it come. But let it come from the North. The South will have none of it. We will stand by the Constitution, and we mean to make you Abolitionists, by the power of Federal guns, if need be, stand by it also. We will have all our forts, all the Army and Navy, which belong to the Constitution, kept in readiness for you, and for any occasion of disaster to our constitutional rights. We will—this Government will—enforce the fugitive slave law, even though it be at the point of the bayonet. We will put troops in the court-house, as Pierce did in Boston. We will put them wherever they are necessary; and we will execute the laws, let them be violated in Georgia or in Massachusetts, in Maryland or in Virginia, North or South.

But, Mr. Chairman, what a glorious Government this is that we are thus, even now, talking about throwing away. Gentlemen, you need not be alarmed. Our difficulties will, I trust, all subside. The South is patient, calm, and ready to listen to any and everything you may say about her; and when you have done uttering your slanders about her, she can say they are like "big lies that soon die away;" like fish out of water, they flounder, and flounder a while, but soon die for the want of aliment. That statesman of the South who *now* gets angry at any ill-natured remarks which may be made by gentlemen from the North in regard to slavery, is unwise, in my judgment, and consults but little the best interests of his constituents.

Sir, but for the remarks of the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. GIDDINGS.] and those of the gentleman from Maine, [Mr. WASHBURN,] I should not now have said one word on this subject. My own opinion is that the question of southern slavery is becoming less exciting every day and every year, and will finally die out, if left to itself. We have certainly other great and leading questions which may well divide the two great political parties of the country.

Now, sir, I wish to call your attention to some suggestions which have occurred to my mind about our foreign relations. I hold war to be the most horrible state in which a nation can be involved. I believe that war would be peculiarly injurious to the planting portions of the Union, simply because it would prevent the exportation of their agricultural products. But no matter what may be the consequences, I say I am in favor of war whenever our rights are invaded by any foreign Power whatever.

Now, a word in regard to Central America. It has been argued that we are bound to maintain the Monroe doctrine. What is the Monroe doctrine? Does it mean that we are to fight every nation upon the face of the globe who undertakes to maintain its own possessions upon this continent?

Why, sir, when Mr. Monroe sent his message to Congress, announcing what is now called the Monroe doctrine, Great Britain owned the same possessions she now owns, and has ever since owned them; and they amount to more than one third of North America. At that time she owned her West India Islands, and she owns them now. France owned her West India Islands, and she owns them now.

Brazil was then, as now, an empire; governed then, as now, by an Emperor installed into power by regular hereditary descent. Did he mean to say that monarchical principles and monarchical governments should not set foot upon this soil? No; because the fact was then existing that they already existed here. Sir, Mr. Monroe meant in that message nothing more than this: that the monarchies of the Old World should not unite to put down the progress of republican institutions in the New. In that sense we acknowledged the independence of Mexico in her contest with Spain, and in that sense this Government has always taken the foremost steps in maintaining the right of self-government and self-protection in the republics of this continent. Do you suppose that the United States would have recognized the independence of the South American republics against Spain if the South American provinces proposed, instead of republics, to erect there separate monarchies? No, sir. It was only because it was proposed to erect republics there, that we acknowledged their independence. And Mr. Clay, the glorious leader of the Democratic party, in 1812, in the House of Representatives, and who, as such leader, conducted that party triumphantly through the war with Great Britain, from the beginning to the end of it, by voting troops and munitions of war—which I am sorry to say others did not do—at a later period of his life carried that same great principle of independent republics in Central and South America; a principle which I hope will still be maintained by the Democratic party of this day, and brought to a triumphant result. According to the Monroe doctrine we are to maintain and support the republics of Mexico and Central America, and all others upon this continent. We are to stand by them, and to support them; not to seize upon them, and appropriate them to ourselves. I believe that a republican form of government is like an angel of light, revealing the will of Heaven to all the down-trodden people of the earth. It will win its own way; it will conquer, too. Not, sir, by blood or by force, but by the seductions and the enchantments of its own goodness; no people need fear the spread of republican government. None need attempt to foster its spirit or to quicken its establishment by filibusterism, or by any other violent means whatsoever. Sir, it will take care of itself. It is very enticing, and will conquer its enemies wherever it may seek to go. It may go into the wilderness alone and unattended, but it will overcome all obstacles, and, as I sincerely believe, finally rest upon the bosom of the world. Sir, I am not opposed to emigration in any form or shape whatever; emigration from the North or from the South, from the East or from the West.

I would like to see emigration from the South, as well as from the North, to climes congenial to each; but, sir, you cannot, with my consent, allow emigration from the North into the Territories of the Union, with the view of making them free States, and thus counteract what has been called the slave power, and yet forbid emigration from the South, even if made for the purpose of producing an equilibrium of political power. Sir, the men of New Orleans and Mobile, of Charleston and Baltimore, or of any other southern or northern port whatever, must be allowed to emigrate to whatever country they may please to go, even as Daniel Webster said, "with arms in their hands." You must not treat such men as pirates, to be captured on the high seas by your ships-of-war. If you do, you yourselves become buccanniers and picaroons, fit subjects of the penalties of international law. Sir, it cannot be believed for a moment that the South will ever consent that you should use the Navy and the Army for the purpose of suppressing emigration from their borders, when emigration from the North may go anywhere it pleases. Sir, I am quite sure that Central America is a rich and fertile country, fit for civilized people, whether they come from the North or from the South; and, I must confess, I should like to see it Americanized. I should like to see that done, sir, but not by force. The simple and peaceful means of emigration alone will accomplish everything that is desirable in this respect.

Sir, I am opposed to filibusterism in all its forms and shapes; but yet I am not willing to stigmatize emigration from the South by the name of filibusterism. I want my northern friends to understand that; I want the Executive to understand that; and I want, also, the Attorney General to understand that. Whatever may have been his opinions in times past, or whatever they may be in the future, he must not call southern emigrants pirates; he must not call simple emigration to Nicaragua or Costa Rica filibusterism, even though the emigrants go with arms in their hands. We have as much enterprise at the South as you have at the North; and all that we ask is an equal chance. You from the North have found welcome upon the hospitable shores of the South. There are men from Maine and from New Hampshire and from Massachusetts even, in my own county; and, so far as my observation has gone, I have seen none of them adverse to the institutions of the South. They are an industrious, honest, and patriotic people; and we and they, all of us together, stand by the Constitution of our common country, as the only shield and defense of our common rights.

Sir, I believe that fifty thousand men from New York, and thousands more from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, may be induced to emigrate to Central America. It is a land where frost is never seen; the cotton and the sugar-plant grow there luxuriantly. Coffee and rice and tobacco, even oranges and lemons, limes, pomegranates, and dates, and every plant or fruit that a rich tropical clime can grow, are of spontaneous growth, and may be cultivated in

perfection there. It is now owned by half-breed Spaniards and mongrels of Indians and negroes. Then, why should not enlightened emigration—the great anglo-Saxon emigration—seek its way, by peaceful means, to this new field of enterprise and wealth? I can only say that you cannot get me to assent to that proposition that such an emigration as this is in violation of any law, human or divine. Oh, sir, how men do ever cling to their old habits! The anglo-Saxon race is, by nature and habit, an emigrating race! How we do encourage our own conceits, and believe in our own merits!

My friend from Maine [Mr. FOSTER] asks me to suspend my speech, and to give way to a motion to adjourn, that I may continue my remarks in the morning; but I prefer not to do so, for I want to say what I have to say now.

Mr. FOSTER. The gentleman will allow me to say that I asked him to close his remarks now, because I wish to hear them, as other gentlemen do, but am obliged to leave the Hall now. I should like to hear the gentleman's speech in the morning.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Maryland has nearly expired.

Mr. BOWIE. Then, sir, I will go on. I find men here, Mr. Chairman, coming from the South, talking about filibustering in spite of France and England, and, if necessary, going to war with these Powers. Sir, I will not involve my people or your people in a war if I can avoid it honorably, because war is the most wicked and disastrous of all acts that a sovereign Power can commit. Sir, I regard a state of war, as all publicists do, as the last remedy to which nations ought to resort, and only to be justified by pressing necessities of defense, either of honor or of sovereignty; and yet, if it becomes necessary in defense of either the honor or the liberties of my country, I would vote for war to-day. But, sir, it is not for men who choose to expatriate themselves, and to renounce the allegiance they owed to their country, to involve the country from which they fled in any wars whatever on their account. No, sir, no; I cannot agree to that. In the last war with Great Britain, she claimed the right to search our vessels for British seamen, on the principle "that once a subject of the King of Great Britain, always a subject." That is pretty much the doctrine they assert now. Notwithstanding the difficulty which some publicists have started, that there is no way of establishing the nationality of a vessel except by exercising the right of search or visitation, I say that the granting of that right would be infinitely more harmful than even the violences that might be committed under the flag.

I would never, for a moment, sanction the idea that any nation has the right to visit and search our vessels for any purpose whatever. We are our own police; and if constabulary powers on the high seas are needed at all, we must see to it that our own officers do their duty.

Sir, if the naval officers of Great Britain or France, or of any other nation, should think that any vessel sailing under our flag is engaged in an

unlawful traffic or enterprise, let them take the responsibility of attempting an arrest. But, so help me God, I will never grant the right of search. The code international has provided no tribunal from whom a search-warrant can be obtained in any such case; and as the law is written, let it stand.

But, sir, I find that this question has assumed somewhat of a sectional aspect, men from the North generally voting to sustain the course of Commodore Paulding, in reference to Nicaragua and the seizure of Walker, and southern men generally taking the opposite view. This, sir, arises from the prevalence of the idea shadowed forth in the speech of the gentleman from Maine, and in the speech of the gentleman from Ohio, this morning, that it would be a southern victory, and that Central America would be a southern acquisition. Now, so far as that is concerned, I can only say to my northern friends that I believe that nine tenths of the emigration to Central America would be from the ports of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and would be of northern men. I believe that, sir. Southern men are not apt to emigrate. They are content to live upon their own broad acres in the sunny South, surrounded by the blessings they already enjoy. But the northern people are prone to emigrate, and the history of our country shows it. I have a living evidence of that fact before me, in the person of my friend from Tennessee, [Mr. MAYNARD,] a son of Massachusetts, who early in life went down to the sunny South and is now here an honored Representative of a great, a proud, a noble southern Commonwealth. As to the gentleman from Maine, [Mr. WASHBURN,] I am satisfied that he is a very clever man, though I do not like his speech much. I think there is a little of the devil in it—a little of the evil genius of the world. [Laughter.] This evil genius has to find a lodgment somewhere, and I think a little of it has lodged in him and a little of it in my friend from Ohio, [Mr. GIDDINGS,] too. It floats in the atmosphere everywhere, and it takes up its residence in those by whom it is inhaled and becomes a part and parcel of their systems. Thank God! my lot is not among such. I love to dwell in peace and harmony with all men. I like the North and the South to come together and shake hands and hug each other to their bosoms in eternal friendship. I am satisfied with our laws as they stand, and with our Union as it is. I want no change. Let all the speeches that have been let off here for mere political effect and for political purposes, stand as an eternal monument to the folly and wickedness of those men who would attempt to dissolve this Union. I, sir, shall continue to stand where I now stand, with the Democratic party of the Union, maintaining the integrity of the Union, and the necessity of carrying out every provision of the Constitution, and holding to the strictest and most solemn accountability before the tribunals of the world all those who violate its principles in any respect whatever.

Mr. Chairman, I did not intend to have entered into this discussion at all, and I have made these desultory remarks solely for the purpose of show-

ing my discontent with the opinions expressed by the gentleman from Maine and by the gentleman from Ohio. Let them revel in all their luxury of hatred and animosity to the South. It is a delightful revelry! You hate me; you hate the South! For what do you hate me? For what do you hate the South? Have we given you any cause of offense? And yet you are eternally and everlastingly upbraiding us. If I were not a semi-philosopher, indeed if I were not a good-tempered man too, such abuse would rankle in my bosom, as it has done in the bosoms of some of my friends. For what purpose are you eternally doing this thing. Is it to help a party? Why cannot you get some other issue? Something or other connected with the great finances of the country, with the public economy of the country, with abuses of administration, or something connected with the powers of the Federal Government, in reference to subjects not so excitable as that of slavery? For after all, slavery is but a form of human labor, and you know it. And besides, sir, it is as much the duty of the North to provide some form of labor for the African race on this continent, now some four millions in number, as it is the duty of the South. It will not do to say they must go free, without at the same time providing for them a means of living by protected labor. If a state of slavery suits them, and they are happy under its operation, you of the North have no right to complain, and, indeed, true philanthropy would require you to hold your tongues. What difference is it to you what form of labor we adopt? You may have white people to wait upon you, if you please; I prefer to have Africans.

My friend from Ohio [Mr. GIDDINGS] said this morning, and so did the gentleman from Maine [Mr. WASHBURN] yesterday, that they planted themselves upon the eternal principles of the Declaration of Independence, that "all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator

with the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Now, sir, I will not say that Mr. Jefferson, in using this language, told a lie. I will not use offensive expressions; but everybody knows that, even as an abstraction, it is not true in any sense whatever. We will take it from the start. "All men are created equal." We know just the reverse of that to be true. Adam and Eve were the only persons ever created by the great God of heaven and earth. All the rest of mankind have been generated, and not created. Sir, there is a wide difference between generation and creation. I leave to philologists the task of defining that difference. Created! Men, women, and children, are not created no, sir. They are born, they are generated; generation takes place, and not creation. Who ever heard of creating a child? The abstraction, therefore, is false in fact, and it is in theory.

Again: we are told they are created EQUAL. Now this is not true in fact or theory; some are born males, some females, and the book of Genesis tells us that the female is the weaker vessel; then again some are born blind and halt and maimed, while others are strong and healthy and vigorous. This abstraction, then, is equally false with the first. But we are endowed with the inalienable rights of life and liberty, says the Declaration of Independence. Not a word of truth in it. What rights are inalienable? Certainly neither life nor liberty; for the law can confiscate both, as is done every day—we hang men for murder, and we imprison men for various offenses. If life or liberty were inalienable these results could not take place. Now, sir, I suppose that Mr. Jefferson meant merely to say that all men were equal in their civil and political rights; but even these, if equal at first, may be lost and transferred in the mutations of power and of civil government.

[Here the hammer fell.]

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